1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

attached to them. Millet is the source of food for almost eight months, extending from September to April. The same applies to barley, which is the food crop during summer. Wheat bread is a delicacy enjoyed now and again, and usually connected with festival and religious occasions. It is also the crop that provides mainly the substance, with the addition of chicken or pigeons, of mutual food gifts on events of marriage, birth and circumcision, as well as the bread that is to be offered to guests. It is also wheat that is normally sold in the market, or exchanged for goods in the shop. Hence the season for weddings and circumcision ceremonies falls only after the harvest of wheat, when it is abundant in the village. More than in any other seed, the villagers are deeply interested in the price of wheat. The price of wheat is the first topic a villager returning from town will discuss with his people who will be all too eager to listen. In an often-heard argument between a cloth-merchant and a farmer, the latter, in attempting to reduce the price of the cloth, will retort to the merchant, 'Do you know how much wheat is worth?'

In connection with food, the writer recalls a tentative suggestion to one of the villagers that one could have a meal without bread, to which the horrified man immediately replied, 'There is no Strength, nor Might save with Allah! May God preserve this bliss for us.' He then enquired how one could get filled without bread. 'Certainly, bulkiness is one of the main things in a satisfactory meal, and nothing is more filling than loaves of bread.'

Bread is not only filling, but also possesses an aura of sacredness, being believed to be the essence of life. The name given to bread is 'aish' which literally means life. It is profane to put bread on the ground, and every effort must be made to pick up any crumb that falls to the ground for fear of it being trodden on.[1] Bread, like written words on paper, which might contain something from the Koran, must be respected. Before mother sweeps the house, children go looking for pieces or crumbs of bread or bits of paper with writing on them, and either give them to birds or goats in the former case or put them in the fire in the case of paper. Children are also enjoined to kiss bread if it falls from their hands on the ground, and if they find it lying in the street to remove it into a crevice in the wall. They are punished if they throw bread from their hands when angry or annoyed, as this might make the 'baraka' fly from the house.

Another deep incentive for work is the desire to emulate and attract social approval. The belief of the villager that nobody, at least in his village, is intrinsically better than any other person, gives him a feeling that all are equal. The strength of the impulse for emulation is clearly expressed in some of their often-repeated maxims: 'Without emulation the world would not have been populated and developed', 'Even com-

[1] Something similar to this has been mentioned by E. W. Lane, which he describes as 'The excessive and unreasonable respect of the Egyptians for bread', *Manners and Customs*, p. 290.

527 Sometimes, as at Shemm el Nessim[44], the feast of Spring, the faithful of both religions mingle in the same holiday and the same rejoicings. The ceremonies may last several days. Formless processions pass, with banners floating in the wind. Arabs come to show off their horsemanship; swings and roundabouts are set up for the children. A thousand booths are arranged in the open air, for the sale of sugar dolls, sweet sesame, roast peas and monkey nuts[45]. The crowd laughs, sings, and makes merry, spending in a single day the savings of a whole year and living only for the moment.

443 437 At the market too there is a crowd. The market is a piece of waste land, sometimes enclosed, outside the bigger villages. The Egyptian Markets Company has established 123 country markets, which may be recognised by their iron railings, in such towns as Mehalla, Embaba, and Tahta. They take a toll of one or two piastres from each seller.

The market is usually held once a week and lasts from dawn to midday. The sellers, men and women, make their way to it at daybreak in long files, choose a spot to lay out their wares, and squat down behind them to wait for customers. Buyers soon appear from all the surrounding villages, and then all is a noisy, confused mêlée of men, cattle and goods.

Piece-goods and hardware are sold by professional merchants who come from the chief town or are going the round of the villages. These merchants get their stock from the wholesalers in the cities. But vegetables, poultry, butter and eggs are sold by the fellah himself, or rather by the fellah's wife, who is a better hand at bargaining. When forced to do so, the fellah brings his *gamoossa* or goat to the market for sale.

432 435 The buyers are other fellaheen who need manufactured goods or foodstuffs which they cannot produce themselves. For two piastres they can replace a broken waterpot (*ballas*) or a worn-out basket. Eight piastres will buy a big pair of drawers, and five a shirt. A *gallabiya* may be had for twenty piastres, and for thirty a *milaya*, or woman's veil. Better qualities are on sale for the *'omda* or for a villager who has done good business. A *gallabiya* or a *milaya* worth 100 piastres — that is something for a man or woman to be proud of.

 [No.(54).- Analyst]

● 437 At last business is over. Before sundown, after interminable parleyings, the fellah goes home with goods or money calculated to increase his well-being, or at least with pleasant memories of a day full of sights and sounds.

484 571 Pilgrimages and markets swell the traffic on the country roads. Here again can be seen the love of the fellaheen for crowding together and moving only in congested groups.

484 [505 292 494] If they have to cross the Nile or a canal to reach the village opposite, the fellaheen throng so densely into the ferry-boat or raft (*ma'adiya*) that accidents are frequent. When they set out on foot or on donkey-back, laden with astonishing bundles, it looks like an evacuation. When for a long journey they take the *trombil* or *halazona* — an old Ford converted into a bus — forty of them push their way in where there is room for only twenty, and they take it very ill if police regulations are enforced. One of the reasons for a certain minister's unpopularity in the country was his insistence on applying these regulations. When they have [497] to travel by train, they arrive several hours beforehand, cluster on a corner of the platform, and scramble all together into one carriage, even if there is plenty of room elsewhere.

In general, then, the fellaheen like being together, out of doors and in crowds. They are sociable people. But does this mean that they are socially minded? Is there any organic relationship between the members of the peasant group?

361 181 Let us first of all consider the village as a whole. This with its surrounding land forms a closed system outside which everyone and everything is foreign and unknown. It leads a secluded and individual life, which is organised from within by habits, customs and taboos handed down from the distant past, immemorial laws which rule absolutely the acts and the pleasures of every inhabitant.

181 619 The fellah finds the same difficulty in widening his outlook in space as in projecting himself into the future and practising foresight. His village is all in all, for it is here and now. It is his country, and the limit of his patriotism.

When a fellah is asked about his nationality, he will reply: "I am from the village of Manfaloot, or Abu Korkas", and occasionally, a little more widely: "I am from the Mudiriya of Menufiya, or Assiut", but rarely, if ever, "I

ness ; but these defects are due to his servitude and isolation. In the words of El-Kolâly, his mind is walled-in between ignorance and tyranny. (*)

Moreover the soil and the care of the soil make the fellah patient, long-suffering and hard. The soil has imprinted on him something of its own earthiness. His very love is entirely physical, and yet he is not immoral.

He is taught from childhood that he comes from his mother's womb. His bad language when he is angry shows how much he knows of sexual matters. Even girls playing with dolls enact scenes of perfect realism. But this calm animal shamelessness has nothing in common with obscenity. Fundamental morality is not affected by it. The fact that everybody is watching everybody else, together with the conservative temperament and instinctive modesty of the fellaheen, makes offences against morals fewer than elsewhere. As El-Kolâly says, 'Among the fellaheen offences against morality represent only a small proportion of the total'.

Poverty and tradition inure the fellah from his early days to the lack of all bodily ease. A comfortable bed, a pleasant home life, a good table, light company — these are things beyond his grasp. Their absence safeguards his morality. So do the precepts of Islam, it might be added ; but the fellaheen are very ignorant of their religion, and the Sheikhs and Ulema do little to teach them. It is more probable that among these primitive people natural morality keeps its original force.

The fellaheen are moral because they believe in God. They are material, but not materialistic. They believe wholeheartedly in the intervention and providence of God. It is always "*In sha Allah*" — if it is God's will. They make no plan, undertake nothing without adding "*In sha Allah*".

A Greek merchant says to a fellah, "You'll bring me your cotton, then, tomorrow ?"

"Yes, *ya khawâga*, (*) *in sha Allah*."

"Five cantars, not less. You understand ?"

"Yes, *in sha Allah*."

"You'll be able to find the camels for them ?"

"*In sha Allah*."

"I must have the goods before midday."

183
771 "*In sha Allah*".

812 "In sha Allah's no good. We're talking business, and
737 I want a definite promise".

"No *in sha Allah*, no cotton, *ya khawâga*. Good day".

771 'God will provide. God distributes His benefits. God
776 protects the crops. God is with the patient. To everyone
181 the fate which God has assigned him. We are from God, and to God we shall return. God is there. God will give in His own good time. Man proposes and God disposes. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' Such are the sentences of peasant theology. They encourage fatalism and deepen resignation, but they are often rich with all the splendour of filial obedience to the Divine Will.

776 The fellah believes in God as the Prime Mover and First
812 of all Living. In spite of the poverty of his intellect, and his ignorance in matters of religion, his conception of God is admirably pure. God is the Almighty, the Just, the Good. All attributes are united in the word the peasant uses for God, *Rabbina*, our Lord and Master. To hear a fellah utter this word is to be convinced of his faith.

771 The superstitions which enmesh his soul have not cor-
782 rupted the essence of his faith. The fellaheen are far more
785 given to prayer and asceticism than other people, for they are by nature believers. They have always been powerfully attracted by sacredness (*baraka*), the supernatural, holiness, or even the appearance of these things.

779 The Catholics among the fellaheen, whom the writer
793 knows best, can be splendidly religious in their lives, even to
771 the point of heroism. Those of their priests who are fellaheen live among them and for them with a devotion and self-denial of which missionaries from Europe would rarely be capable. It must not be forgotten that the first monks of the Christian world, the monks of the Thebaid, were fellaheen (").

power is given to him he imposes on simpletons by various tricks until he steals whatever they possess. You even see him in a court of justice looking innocent and pitied by men just because of his influence over them.

The evil magnetic electricity, which we name *envy*, directs itself by way of man's senses. And as it effects the sense of sight, so also sometimes touch, smell and hearing.

One of my acquaintances said to me that the *Fakīh*[1] of their village was "envying" children by staring at them, and whenever the envier directed his gaze upon the envied one in the moment of excitement his poison affected that current and weakened the life movement in animals and plants, and they were wasted and lost. And in proportion to the power of the envier in overcoming the power of the envied, so is the strength or weakness of the danger, and there results a slight or a severe illness, or death, or the snapping of trees, or the destruction of lofty palaces.

A reliable person has related that there was a man, named al-Safti, in the village of Dafrawi in the Province of Buhaira, twenty years ago, who was an evil-doer. The people of that district knew this. One of his atrocities was that when he was sitting with a company of evil companions, one day, in front of his house, there passed by him a number of Gypsies (*Ghagar*) driving camels to market. He bargained with them for a camel, but they did not accept the price which it was worth to them. Then one of his companions said to him, "Woe to thee, O Ṣaftī! Allow us to eat of its flesh just now!" So he shook his head (in assent) and overtook the merchants and seized the camel's head-rope, and said, while he was intently looking at it, "Oh, you fat camel!" [p. 96.] Then the narrator swears that the camel did not move from its place but fell to the ground, and they slaughtered it. But (he says) the strange fact was that its flesh was tasteless and blueish in colour.

A friend told me that two men skilled in envy (*ḥasad*) and renowned for it were feared by the people. One day one of these two went to visit his friend (the other envier) and found him ploughing the land with two large oxen. So he looked

[1] [See footnote above, p. 40.]

THE FELLĀḤÎN OF UPPER EGYPT

drum (*darâbukkeh*), etc., while at a short distance the tattooer may be engaged in decorating the hand of some youth.[1]

Various entertainers attend most of the larger markets, such as a conjurer, a reciter of legends, musicians accompanied by a male dancer, to say nothing of the fortune-teller, who, seated in a small tent, usually attracts a considerable number of people. He makes a series of holes in sand spread on a handkerchief upon the ground in front of him, and by certain methods of counting these deducts his conclusions. The conjurers are really very clever.

It will thus be seen that business on market-days is pleasantly combined with pleasure.

Conversation is general and loud, sounding to the unaccustomed European ear like violent quarrelling.

When the warmer weather begins the traders erect rough booths, looking like primitive umbrellas, under which they can take shelter from the heat. Both time and patience are required to effect a purchase, for the seller of an article asks quite double the price he will accept. Arguing and gesticulating, the trader and would-be purchaser wrangle over the article until the price is adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties. Sometimes, if the trader is insistent, the would-be purchaser gets up from the ground and proceeds to walk away, whereupon the trader usually betrays a readiness to make further concession, and finally agrees to accept a lower price than that demanded.

In the hot season the water-carrier does good business, as heat, bargaining, and shouting make for thirst. He is usually paid not in money, so I was told, but by small presents of onions, tomatoes, or other delicacies.

I have observed that the people show praiseworthy consideration for the animals which they bring to the market. On their arrival one of the first things the men do is to provide their animals with fodder, and also water if such is obtainable. One year, when I was living in the fields near a village, the market was held close to my camp, and I particularly noticed this consideration for their beasts on the part of the peasants.

As the afternoon advances the traders begin to pack up the goods which have remained unpurchased, and those who have come from a distance load their baggage on their donkeys, and so depart to their several villages.

[1] See Chapter III.